

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSC-01 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7375
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINR, GY
SUBJECT: HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL CHANGES

REF: GEORGETOWN 2538

BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE ON AUGUST 5, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM ANNOUNCED SEVERAL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL CHANGES, INCLUDING THE RESIGNATION OF MINISTER OF TRADE GEORGE KING, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF THREE NEW MINISTERS. THE PERSONNEL CHANGES COME IN THE WAKE OF NUMEROUS INDICTMENTS IN A FOREIGN EXCHANGE SCANDAL AND PROMISES BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO ABOLISH CORRUPTION. END SUMMARY

1. MINISTER OF TRADE GEORGE KING WAS REPORTED BY PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM AT THE LATTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE OF AUGUST 5 TO HAVE RESIGNED BECAUSE HE WAS "EMBARRASSED" BY THE WIDESPREAD IRREGULARITIES INVOLVING HIS MINISTRY WHICH RESULTED IN NUMEROUS INDICTMENTS ANNOUNCED AUGUST 4 (REFTEL). THE PRIME MINISTER STATED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS CONVINCED THAT
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KING HAD NOT BEEN PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN THE CORRUPTION UNCOVERED IN THE MINISTRY.

2. IN SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE MOVE, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM APPOINTED ACTING CARICOM SECRETARY GENERAL JOSEPH TYNDALL AS THE NEW MINISTER OF TRADE. TYNDALL, 51, WHO HAD BEEN SECRETARY OF THE BANK OF GUYANA UNTIL HE WAS

SECONDED TO CARICOM FIRST AS DEPUTY THEN AS ACTING SECRETARY GENERAL, HAD HAD A BRIGHT REPUTATION AS A RISING ECONOMIST WHICH WAS NOT, APPARENTLY, KEPT BURNISHED BY HIS YEARS WITH CARICOM.

3. PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GUYANA WATER AUTHORITY SEERAM PRASHAD WAS NAMED BY BURNHAM TO REPLACE ABDUL SALIM AS REGIONAL MINISTER FOR THE EAST DEMARARA/WEST COAST BERBICE AREA. (SALIM HAS BEEN DEMOTED TO THE SECRETARIAT OF THE RULING PEOPLES' NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC).) PRASHAD, NOW 41, ALTHOUGH TECHNICALLY TRAINED IN LONDON (ENGINEERING, WE BELIEVE), HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN LOCAL PNC POLITICS FOR SOME TIME WHERE HIS ORIGINS UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE BEEN USEFUL TO THE PRIME MINISTER AS A DEMONSTRATION OF EAST INDIAN SUPPORT AMONG YOUTH.

4. FITZ CARMICHAEL, REGIONAL MINISTER OF THE NORTHWEST REGION, HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED TO BECOME REGIONAL MINISTER FOR REGION 3 (THE RUPUNUNI). FOR CARMICHAEL, 43, WHO ROSE FROM THE RANKS OF LOCAL PNC POLITICS AND TEACHING SCHOOL IN THE NORTHWEST, THE MOVE APPEARS TO BE A LATERAL ONE IN TERMS OF HIS CAREER. NO ONE HAS YET BEEN NAMED TO SUCCEED CARMICHAEL, WHOSE FORMER NORTHWEST REGION INCLUDES APPROXIMATELY 1,100 AMERICANS AT THE ISOLATED PEOPLES' TEMPLE AGRICULTURAL PROJECT AT JONESTOWN. CARMICHAEL SUCCEEDED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PHILIP DUNCAN, WHO WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT.

5. RALPH VAN SLUTMAN, A PNC BACKBENCHER OF WHOM THE EMBASSY KNOWS LITTLE, WAS APPOINTED MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR IRRIGATION PROJECTS.

6. O.A. BAPTIST WAS APPOINTED EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE LARGE STATE UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT UTILITIES AND PUBLIC COMPANIES, THE GUYANA STATE CORPORATION (GUYSTAC), WHOSE PRESIDENT IS THE PRIME MINISTER. PREVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF GUYSTAC (I.E., PERMANENT SECRETARY FRANK NOEL, WHO WAS INDICTED FOR CURRENCY EXCHANGE VIOLATIONS AUGUST 4) REPORTED THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF TRADE, WHEREAS BAPTIST WILL NOW REPORT DIRECTLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER. BAPTIST, WHO WAS FORMERLY MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE LOCAL PRIVATELY OWNED TOBACCO COMPANY, HAD BEEN NAMED TO GUYSTAC LAST APRIL 3 AS FINANCIAL DIRECTOR. HE IS AN ACCOUNTANT BY TRAINING.

7. COMMENT: RUMORS HAVE BEEN CURRENT FOR SO MANY WEEKS AND MONTHS OF IMPENDING CABINET CHANGES CENTERED AROUND

FORMER MINISTER OF TRADE KING THAT THE DENOUEMENT COMES
AS SOMETHING OF AN ANTI-CLIMAX. ADDITIONAL CHANGES, HOOW-
EVER, MIGHT WELL TAKE PLACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE APPOINT-
MENT OF TYNDALL AS MINISTER OF TRADE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT
OF THE CURRENT CHANGES, ALTHOUGH SOME LOCAL CYNICS CONSIDER
THAT HIS MAJOR QUALIFICATION FOR THE POSITION IS THAT HE
HAS NOT BEEN DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH GUYANESE GOVERNMENT
FINANCIAL OR TRADE MATTERS FOR SOME YEAR.
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